

Perspectives of Law Enforcement and Principals in Effectiveness of School Resource  
Officers and Armed Staff

Capstone Project

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By

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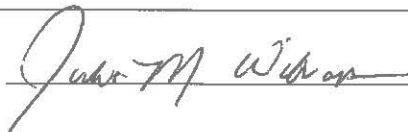
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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to all the public school employees and law enforcement officials who diligently strive to keep our public school children safe.

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to compare the perspectives of public school officials (principals) and law enforcement officials (chiefs and commanders) in regards to the effectiveness of armed school resource officers (SROs) and armed school staff members on overall school safety and the ability to counter active shooter situations. It replicated a 2015 study by Chrursiel, Wolf, Hanson, Rojek, and Kaminski. This study was descriptive non-experimental with convenience sampling. It used data collected from a survey that was distributed to over 1,500 Minnesota public school principals and 300 law enforcement officials.

The participants were asked about their beliefs concerning the effectiveness of SROs and armed school employees. Both principals and law enforcement officials strongly felt that utilizing a full-time SRO was an effective means to increase school safety and combat the threat of a school shooting. Both groups felt that arming principals and teachers would not be an effective measure. This study revealed that both groups were quite willing to share the financial burden that comes with funding a school resource officer. It also uncovered that those participants who already have a fulltime SRO were more likely to have favorable beliefs toward their effectiveness. The implications of this phenomenon could have profound effects on future public school security policy.

School shootings at Columbine High School, Sandy Hook Elementary, and many others like them have sparked a frenzy of activity by the media and policy makers at all levels. This study has given a voice to those on the frontline of this issue--public school principals and law enforcement officials. There has been little empirical

research examining the beliefs of key stake-holders who are asked to carry out adopted policies. It contributes to the significant gap in literature concerning their perspectives.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

Instances of school shootings have dominated news cycles for decades. Over and over the same patterns have emerged; people initially became shocked and horrified, but then they swiftly returned to normal life and continued about their business as usual. Politicians, special interest groups, and the media have discussed the problem endlessly, but little has been done to deal about it. Is it because the proposed solutions were simple sound bites with little relevance to what is best for the stakeholders involved, or were there other factors at play? Either way, during the creation of public policy regarding school shootings there has been little formal input from the people who have the greatest responsibility in dealing with and deterring them-- school officials and law enforcement. This study was designed to give a voice to those stake holders to add dialogue to public policy.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to compare the perspectives of public school officials (principals) and law enforcement officials (chiefs and commanders) in regards to the effectiveness of armed school resource officers (SROs) and armed school staff members on overall school safety and the ability to counter active shooter situations. It sought to provide information that is necessary to help shape effective public policy decisions.

### **Background and Significance of the Study**

The perceived threat of an active shooter on a school campus is real. It is something that every principal, employee, student, parent, and local law official must anticipate and prepare for. We have seen many heated debates take place in the media and in Congress on how best to solve

the matter. Still, the real issues have not been reliably prioritized and actual policy guidance has been rather insufficient (Lawrence, Birkland, 2004). The consequence of this predicament has forced state and local politicians to create their own policies with little guidance. Many states have invested millions of tax dollars into measures such as setting up video surveillance systems, metal detectors, hot-lines and even sophisticated entrance procedures—all actions have resulted in uncertain returns (Crawford 2015).

Many states successfully passed gun-control measures that targeted specific weapons such as modern sporting rifles in response to high-profile school shootings. Those efforts were made despite statistics showing virtually no effect on mass shootings. These types of policies did little to stop mass shootings during the ten-year 1994 federal ban on certain military-style assault weapons and modern sporting rifles (Fox, DeLateur, 2013). Notwithstanding the obvious advantages of doing so, few studies have reached out to public school principals and law enforcement officials to have their voices heard (Chrursiel, Wolf, Hanson, Rojek, Kaminski, 2015). There have been very little empirical data collected regarding the attitudes and perceptions concerning public school administrators carrying firearms on campus and the effectiveness of armed SROs to detour and stop an active shooter situation (Bartla, Brown, 2015).

This study was built upon the work of Chrursiel, et al. (2015) that sought to explore the perceptions and beliefs about firearms being used in campus security from the actual stakeholders involved—principals and local law enforcement officials. The results of their study showed strong support for SROs and a belief that they could be an effective measure in maintaining school safety. Their study showed that over 99% of law enforcement officials agreed that SROs had a positive impact over school safety. This belief was also strongly

expressed by 95% of public school principals in that same study. One of the largest divisions between the two groups about the use of SROs was funding. Law enforcement officials showed that they were more likely to support a SRO (70%) if the funding came entirely from outside their department. It dipped to only 10% support if it was to be entirely funded through their department. Principals were somewhat more flexible. The Chrursiel study showed that there was 60 % support if the SRO was fully funded externally and 30% support if the funding came entirely out of the district's budget (Chrursiel, et al, 2015). There was little reason to assume that this current study would indicate any different results despite the geographic separation.

This study addressed three research questions: To what extent, do public school principals and law enforcement officials differ in regards to (1) the use of armed school resource officers, (2) armed administrators and (3) armed teachers.

Null hypotheses: Public school principals and law enforcement officials will not differ in regards to (1) the use of armed school resource officers, (2) armed administrators and (3) armed teachers.

## **Setting**

This study explored the perspectives of school principals and law enforcement officials within Minnesota regarding perspectives on the use of firearms on school campuses for security and their effectiveness in response to school shootings. A survey was used that asked a series of questions in order contrast the beliefs of the participants. The survey was distributed via email.

## **Assumptions**

This topic has been at the center of many heated debates shaped by personal and political biases. It was not unrealistic to assume that an individual's view concerning the appropriateness of firearms on school campuses would play a large roll in his or her preserved effectiveness of

such measures. The media has continually reported school shooting incidences through ideological lenses. Both Democrats and Republicans have used their ideologies to push partisan solutions. Despite all the noise, many of the vital questions have gone unanswered. Would having a full-time armed SRO be a welcome solution? Would allowing principals and teachers access to firearms be accepted as effective? This study attempted to ask key stake-holders these very questions away from the media spotlight and political pandering. Even away from all the noise generated by the passions of this debate, it was safe to assume that people would be influenced by their own personal biases. Likewise, it was safe to assume that their experience with firearms or preconceived notions of an ideal educational atmosphere would shape their perceptions about such an intense topic. Despite the limited studies around this subject, it was with caution that the assumption was made that educators and law enforcement officials would be in favor of SROs. It was also assumed they would not be supportive of armed administrators or teachers. This study aimed to shed more light on the issue in a constructive manner despite possible predetermined assumptions.

### **Scope and Limitations of the Study**

There were several limitations to this study. First, the participants were chosen using convenience sampling. This was not a double-blind research study. This was a descriptive non-experimental study. There was no systematic method used to pick the participants other than by profession, and it is reasonable to assume the perceptions of participants didn't represent the larger target population. Second, the survey that was distributed was modified without using any scientific process. Care was taken to limit bias, but the questions were generated based on questions from a similar study and are limited in scope. Another limitation to this study was that it had a small sample size from one state. Minnesota has a small overall population compared to

the entire country. To get a better idea of what the perception of this topic is nationally, one would have had to significantly broaden the study to all fifty states. Also, this study focused on a very narrow spectrum of school security—school shooting and several possible solutions. Any future study could easily expand by inquiring about perspectives pertaining to other possible solutions dealing with active shooter situations on public school property. This study also failed to inquire into the perspectives from another very important stakeholder—teachers. Given more resources and time, this study could have easily been expanded to include these critical stakeholders. Taken all together, these limitations severely hindered the researcher’s ability to extrapolate any conclusive scientifically significant data.

What this study did provide was a window into how the participants were thinking about this issue and a platform to express those beliefs. While no statistically significant conclusions could be assigned to the data presented in this study, it did add a small piece of the puzzle to the national debate. Even after one considered the limitations of this study, assumptions were possible. The voices and concerns of real stake-holders were added to the debate.

### **Definitions**

- School Resource Officers (SRO)-- A sworn law enforcement officers responsible for providing security and crime prevention services in schools.  
<http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/supportingsafeschools>
- School Shooting-- a violent act in which someone, usually a student, uses a gun to kill or injure teachers, students, and staff.  
<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/us/dictionary/american/school-shooting>
- Law Enforcement Officials—anyone who is employed at a law enforcement agency that has authority to publicly represent the views of said agency.

- School Campus Officials--anyone who is employed at a public school or private school campus that has the authority to publicly represent the views of said agency.

## **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to compare the perspectives of public school officials (principals) and law enforcement officials (chiefs and commanders) in regards to the effectiveness of armed school resource officers (SROs) and armed school staff members on overall school safety and the ability to counter active shooter situations. Despite limitations of this study, it did provide a path for Minnesota principals and law enforcement officials to express their beliefs. This study also helped contributed to the gap of empirical data available to leaders who form public policy regarding school safety and dealing with school shootings.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

This study was designed to compare the attitudes principals and law enforcement officials have concerning the presence and use of firearms on campus property as deterrence and counter to an active shooter scenario. If such a situation ever presented itself, principals and law enforcement officials would have to deal with the immediate situation and its aftermath. Despite their obvious direct involvement, little has been done to seek out and explore how they feel about the ideas being proposed. What concerns did they have with such policies and what are some possible unintended consequences? The United States Congress has explored the issue mostly guided by the media and often gets bogged down in partisan wrangling over policies that have had little or nothing to do with realistic and effective solutions (Lawrence, Birkland, 2004).

### **Historical Overview of High Profile Campus Shootings**

The recent phenomenon of high-profile school shootings has sparked an intense feeling of fear and concern across the country. It is generally accepted that the shooting in April of 1999 at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado provided the initial spark for the current debate. Two young men came to school and open-fired on their students and on campus staff members. They killed 12 students and one teacher before taking their own lives. (Lawrence & Birkland, 2004). The event (the worst school shooting at that time in our nation's recent history) was so horrific and widely covered by the media that it even made it into the 2000 presidential election campaign (Steelye, 1999). Since then, there have been over 262 high profile school shootings that have led to more fear and the stark realization that any campus could be the next one to fall victim to a mass shooting (Roberts, 2015).

The deadliest single act of gun violence took place on April 16, 2007 at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, Virginia (Virginia Tech). On that day, 32 students were shot dead and another 15 were wounded when a student opened fire with two handguns. Despite being the deadliest, the Virginia Tech shootings influence was eclipsed on December 17, 2012. On that day, a shooter entered a school campus in Newtown, Connecticut and killed 20 children (most of them first graders) and seven adults (Roberts, 2015). The Newtown shooting received round-the-clock media coverage and intensely shocked the nation.

### **A Closer Look at the Actual Threat of a School Shooting**

It is important to note that despite the seemingly high number of school shootings, it is statistically far more likely that any given student will be a victim of a lethal accident such as a car accident. This fact was evident in the 1998-1999 school year. Students had only a one in two million chance of dying on campus (Brooks, Schiraldi, & Zeidenberg, 2000). They were far more likely to die somewhere other than on a school campus. After studying the numbers of students killed in elementary and secondary school homicides over the ten-year period from 1996-2006, a group of researchers calculated that the frequency of a school experiencing a school shooting was once every 6000 years (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, & Jimerson. 2010). The saturation of media coverage and horrific nature of each shooting has exaggerated the perception of the threat.

Regardless of the statistical probability, principals and law enforcement officials still need to prepare for such an unlikely event. They are the people that will be held accountable for what happened before, during, and after an event. Despite this reality, a study done in 2006 showed a staggering 42.8% out of 2137 districts that participated in a nationwide study reported having no written mass casualty prevention plan (Graham, Shirm, Liggin, Aitken, & Dick 2006).



Unfortunately, there have been few empirical studies in regards to how public school and law enforcement officials feel about some of the policies that have been proposed. This research intended to add much needed insight into the attitudes of having armed personnel on campuses to deal with active shooter situations, what actual stake-holders think about who should have (if anyone) firearms in including campus staff and/or SROs.

### **The Emerging Solutions to Detour and Effectively Respond to School Shooting**

There have been a host of measures and policies introduced or adopted to deal with campus shooting in the wake of recent tragedies. Many have been enacted at the state level, while others have been endorsed at the local level. Some of the actions taken are relatively simple, passive, and generally inexpensive. Many schools have trained teachers in safety measures, installed basic security cameras, installed metal detectors and restricted entrances, set up hotlines for reporting trouble, and created written plans in the event of a shooting incident. While many of these measures did make students and staff feel safer, research suggests that such measures have been generally ineffective on crime rates (Crawford 2015). Other districts have adopted more complex, aggressive, and more expensive measures. They have hired SROs, completely renovated buildings, and hired private security firms. The solutions ranged from hardening the campus facilities, adapting zero tolerance policies, to having armed personnel present (civilian permit holders, SROs and even campus staff).

**Armed SROs.** The use of school resource officers and other security personnel has been increasing and gaining momentum over the last decade. In 2007, nearly 38 percent of local police departments assigned full time sworn officers to be SROs. In jurisdictions with 25,000-499,999 residents, almost 90 percent assigned full-time officers (Reaves 2010). Despite the popularity of SROs among educators, the effectiveness of SROs and other forms of security

personal has been undetermined (Crawford 2015). One study suggested that SROs have been effective in crime prevention concerning issues like bullying, racial tensions, student disrespect, and gangs on high school campuses, yet it also found that serious school violence was much more likely if security personnel were carrying weapons. (Jennings, Khey, Maskaly, & Donner 2011).

The driving concerns about the use of armed SROs and other armed security guards are legal liabilities, costs, adequate and effective training, and increased contact for students with the criminal justice system, and increase in potential for injuries and deaths from firearm (Crews, G., Crews, A. & Burton. 2013, abstract). All these factors and more must be taken into consideration when implementing this type of policy. With ever increasing media and political attention, (including President Obama's executive orders to increase SRO presence in schools) it is more likely that law enforcement and campus officials will need to look at the use of armed SROs despite their own lack of voice in the national conversation.

**Armed teachers and administrators.** The idea of arming teachers was a very contentious one. The main argument for arming teachers was that law enforcements response times were simply too slow. It took three hours for law enforcement to enter Columbine, secure the scene, and treat the wounded. There was a twenty-minute delay at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Law enforcement did manage to respond to the Virginia Tech shooting in under ten minutes, but that was well after most of the killing had already taken place. Many law enforcement experts in the field drastically changed the way they approached an active shooting situation. They started training respondents to assume that in a mass shooting scenario, the death rate would be around one victim every 15 seconds (Melchior, 2013, para 11). The argument was

that properly trained teachers or administrators armed with a firearm would already be on the campus and could respond almost instantaneously.

On the other side of the argument, there had been little empirical research into how the teachers and school administrators felt about the carrying a firearm, or working alongside a co-worker that was in possession of a firearm. One of the few empirical research studies conducted (The School Improvement Network which surveyed 10,661 educators from all 50 states) to gather sentiments of teachers in relation to this issue, found that while 66.1% felt armed guards would make the school much safer and 87% felt that an armed law enforcement officer would as well, 72% said they would not bring a firearm to school if they could (School Improvement Network 2013).

## **Summary**

The probability of any given public school experiencing a mass shooting event is statistically extremely low. Despite this fact, the disproportionately fearful coverage by the media and some unfounded legislation purposed by the government has made for an atmosphere of inevitability. Law enforcement and principals across the nation have either had to enforce policies forced down from above or create their own with little support. There has been little effort to contact and determine how the actual stake-holders (law enforcement and principals) feel about what would be the best way to move forward. This study intended to contribute to the scarcely existing empirical data reflecting the perspectives of actual stake holders for future policy formations and implementation.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to compare the attitudes of public school officials (principals) and law enforcement officials (chiefs and commanders) in regards to the use of armed school resource officers (SROs) and armed school staff members to counter active shooter situations. While mass shootings are rare on school campuses, they do happen. Every principal and law enforcement agency must plan for the possibility of such an event to accrue at any given time. They are key stakeholders when it comes to enacting policies around the issue. That is why it was so important to reach out to them and explore their perspectives.

### **Research Design**

This study was structured as a quantitative inquiry comparing the attitudes and perspectives of the key stake holders listed above. This research is a replication of the study conducted by the University of South Carolina—*Law enforcement executives and principal perspectives on school safety measures: School resource officers and armed school employees* (Chrursiel, et al. 2015). The two surveys used from the original study were, combined, modified and supplemented to acquire information relevant to this study considering the limited scope and resources. Great care was taken to insure the questions were presented in a manner that minimized possible bias. In the original study, two surveys were used. One specifically for school principals and one specifically for law enforcement officials. For this study, both law enforcement and school principals were given the exact same quantitative survey instrument. The original two surveys were combined to make distribution and analysis more convenient.

## **Setting and Participants**

The setting for this study encompassed schools and law enforcement facilities across a geographical area covering Minnesota. The target population for this study was law enforcement executives and school principals in the U.S. Correspondents initially took place via email except for one physical contact to establish data for further contacts and to formulate a study population. The educational contact was made in person by the researcher who personally contacted one principal at a northern elementary school. The law enforcement contact was made via e-mail to an association to set up state wide distribution of the survey to existing law enforcement through a weekly e-newsletter. The initial sample size was 300 law enforcement executives (chiefs and commanders) and 47 school principals from Northern Minnesota.

Immediately after the surveys were distributed, one of the principals' group participants contacted the researcher with an offer to distribute the survey to The Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA) to principals across the entire state. This action would have increased the principal group participants from 47 to nearly 1,500. The researcher immediately sent in a change of protocol request the UMD Institutional Review Board (IRB) to increase the number of participants. This procedure took twelve days to complete. After the expansion request was approved, the survey was then distributed to the larger target increasing the total principal group to 1,500.

## **Measures**

This study used data collected from one survey that was sent via email to 300 ( $n=300$ ) law enforcement official and school principals 1,500 ( $n=1,500$ ) in Northern Minnesota. The survey was sent out initially to a small number of the participants and expanded over a period of three weeks. The survey was resent every week over a period of four weeks. It consisted of

several demographic questions and numerous perspective questions. Participants were asked to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with each statement. A four point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=agree, and 4=strongly agree) was used to identify the attitudes of each participant toward the premise of each inquiry.

This study was descriptive non-experimental and the data was cross sectional. The dependent variables in this study were support for or against the use of firearms in schools for security and as deterrence against and active shooter. The independent variables were the positions held by the respondents in the study and the geographical location of those respondent.

### **Data Gathering and Analysis**

The data was gathered using a program called Qualtrics used with permission by the University of Minnesota. The information was separated into four distinct parts. Demographics, perceptions around SRO, armed administrators, and armed teachers. It was further examined to see if there was any correlation between common perceptions and professional fields--law enforcement and principals. The survey used for this study was a combined and modified version of the surveys used in the previously mentioned University of South Carolina study (Chrursiel, et al. 2015). The two South Carolina surveys were considerably longer and were designed to specifically the participants based on their professional occupation. There was one survey for principals and another for law enforcement. The data was later statistically analyzed to compare differences in the attitudes of the two population groups. To simplify the distributions process and statistical analysis of the data, the researcher of this study combined the two surveys into one that could be used for both sample populations.

To effectively combine two lengthy surveys into one simple instrument and still gather meaningful data, the researcher had to seek the counsel of several previous and current stake-

holders on the related issue. First, the researcher's academic advisor, who has years of administrative experience in the public-school system was consulted and shown the two copies of the surveys. Both the researcher and advisor narrowed the list of questions to only the ones that would provide information relevant to the purpose of this study. Next, the researcher combined the questions into one simple survey and distributed a copy to the Public Relations Officer of the Minnesota Chiefs Association and to an elementary principal of a Minnesota public school for feedback and possible distribution contact information. Both, contacts were satisfied with the questions and layout of the survey. As an effective means to keep the two populations separate in the data analysis each participant is asked to identify their current positions and number of years in the field. The surveys were later divided into two categories (principals & law enforcement) in the initial data interpretation phase of this study.

### **Summary**

This study asked Minnesota principals and law enforcement officers to share their beliefs about the effectiveness of armed SROs, armed administrators and armed teachers. A survey was distributed to principal and law enforcement officers through-out Minnesota. The questions were designed to assess beliefs concerning each of the three methods of providing school security and countering a school shooting situation mentioned above. The information was then gathered and analyzed to contrast the beliefs of the two groups in the study.

## Chapter Four

### Results and Discussion

#### Results

The data showed similar results to 2015 University of South Carolina study, except for a few instances—mostly pertaining to funding (Chrursiel, et al. 2015). The data has been presented into 10 tables highlighting points of interest. Each table is preceded by a written explanation of the data. Following the presentation of the data, there is a brief discussion of the findings and a summary of the chapter.

**Participants characteristics.** Table 1 shows the characteristics of the participant's gender and race. The total number of participants were 36 (N=36). There was a total of 23 (63%) females and 13 (36.1%) males. Further broken down, there were 6 (33%) male and 12 (66%) female Principals. In respects to law enforcement, there were 17 (4%) males and 1 (5.6) females. The two groups were different in gender, Chi-square (1) = 14.57,  $p = .000$ ; in specific, more female in principal group, but all law enforcement officials were male. None of the participants identified as Trans-Spectrum or Other.

In regards to race, there were 32 (88.9%) that identified as Caucasian, White, Non-Hispanic, 14 (77%) principals and 18 (100 %) law enforcement. There was 1 (2.8%) principal that identified as Hispanic/Latino and 1 (2.8%) principal that identified as Multi-racial. There were 2 (5.6%) principals that identified as Native American/American Indian. As far as diversity between the two groups, principals represented 4 (100%) participants that identified as other than Caucasian, white, Non-Hispanic. However, racial categories were not statistically different between the two groups, Chi-square (1) = 4.50,  $p = .212$ ; the clear majority was White in both



groups. None of the participants identified as African, African American, Black, Asian, Asian American, or other.

With respect to age, principals had a mean (with a standard deviation in parentheses) of 45.17 (6.61) years, while law enforcement had a mean of 48.44 (7.12) years. Principals had a mean of 9.61 (SD 7.29) years in the profession, while law enforcement had a mean of 24.39 (6.62). The total means for both groups age when compared was 46.81 (6.97) and the mean years in profession was 17 (10.26). Age was not significantly different in the two groups,  $t(34) = -1.43$ ,  $p = .161$ ; however, the law enforcement group, on average, had been working more years in the profession,  $t(34) = -6.24$ ,  $p = .000$ .

Table 1  
*Participants Characteristics*

Variable	Principal (N=18)		Law Enforcement (N=18)		Total (N=36)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	6	33.3	17	94.4	23	63.9
Female	12	66.7	1	5.6	13	36.1
Trans-Spectrum or Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
<b>Race</b>						
African, African American, Black	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Asian, Asian American	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Caucasian, White, Non-Hispanic	14	77.8	18	100.0	32	88.9
Hispanic/Latino	1	5.6	0	0.0	1	2.8
Native American/American Indian	2	11.1	0	0.0	2	5.6
Multi-racial/Mixed	1*	5.6	0	0.0	1	2.8
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)
Age	45.17	(6.61)	48.44	(7.12)	46.81	(6.97)
Years in the Profession	9.61	(7.29)	24.39	(6.92)	17.00	(10.26)

Note. \* White and Native American

**Beliefs regarding School Resource Officers (SRO).** Table 2 presents the results of the participant's beliefs about SROs when ask specific questions. In regards to the question 1 (Q1), whether a SRO would improve overall safety, there was a significant difference between the two groups. The mean (with standard deviation in parentheses) for principals, 3.44 (0.71), was significantly lower than the mean, 3.89 (0.32), for law enforcement,  $t(34) = -2.43$ ,  $p = .02$ . Question 2 (Q2), an SRO would prevent a school shooting from occurring produced similar results. The mean for principals, 2.44 (0.86), was also significantly lower than the mean, 3.00 (0.77), for law enforcement,  $t(34) = -2.05$ ,  $p = .05$ . As with Q2, Q3 (A SRO would reduce the number of victims of a school shooting were to occur) saw a significant difference as well. The mean for principals, 3.17 (0.79), was significantly lower than the mean, 3.72 (0.46), for law enforcement,  $t(34) = -2.59$ ,  $p = .01$ . The average mean for all three questions gave a relative measure of the general attitude toward SROs. The average mean for principals, 3.02 (0.70), was significantly lower than the mean, 3.54 (0.40), for law enforcement,  $t(34) = -2.73$ ,  $p = .01$ . The data suggests that both groups shared positive beliefs toward SROs.

Table 2  
*Beliefs Regarding School Resource Officers: Comparison between Principal and Law Enforcement*

Question	Principal (n=18)		Law Enforcement (n=18)		t(34)	p
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)		
Q1. An SRO would improve overall safety within a school.	3.44	(0.71)	3.89	(0.32)	-2.43	.02*
Q2. An SRO would prevent a school shooting from occurring.	2.44	(0.86)	3.00	(0.77)	-2.05	.05*
Q3. An SRO would reduce the number of victims if a school shooting were to occur	3.17	(0.79)	3.72	(0.46)	-2.59	.01**
Average of Three Questions Above	3.02	(0.70)	3.54	(0.40)	-2.73	.01**

*Note .* Scores are on a 4-point scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree);

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

**Beliefs regarding armed administrators.** Table 3 presents the results of the participant's beliefs about armed administrators when ask specific questions. In regards to the question 1 (Q1), whether an armed administrator would improve overall safety, there was no significant difference between the two groups. The mean (with standard deviation in parentheses) for principals, 2.22 (1.06), was exactly the same as than the mean, 2.22 (1.00), for law enforcement,  $t(34) = 0$ ,  $p = 1.00$ . Question 2 (Q2), an armed administrator would prevent a school shooting from occurring, produced similar but not exact results. The mean for principals, 1.94 (0.87), was slightly lower than the mean, 2.00 (0.97), for Law Enforcement,  $t(34) = -1.18$ ,  $p = .89$ . As with Q2, Q3 (an armed administrator would reduce the number of victims of a school shooting were to occur) saw no significant difference either. The mean for principals, 2.39 (1.04), was slightly lower than the mean, 2.50 (0.92), for law enforcement,  $t(34) = -0.34$ ,  $p = .74$ . The average mean for all three questions gave a relative measure of the general attitude toward armed administrators. The average mean for principals, 2.19 (0.94), was slightly lower than the mean, 2.24 (0.88), for law enforcement,  $t(34) = -0.18$ ,  $p = .86$ . The data suggests that both groups shared negative beliefs toward armed administrators.

Table 3  
*Beliefs Regarding Armed Administrators: Comparison between Principal and Law Enforcement*

Question	Principal (n=18)		Law Enforcement (n=18)		t(34)	p
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)		
Q1. An armed administrator would improve overall school safety.	2.22	(1.06)	2.22	(1.00)	0	1.00
Q2. An armed administrator would prevent a school shooting from occurring.	1.94	(0.87)	2.00	(0.97)	-0.18	.89
Q3. An armed administrator would reduce the number of victims if a school shooting were to occur.	2.39	(1.04)	2.50	(0.92)	-0.34	.74
Average of Three Questions Above	2.19	(0.94)	2.24	(0.88)	-0.18	.86

Note . Scores are on a 4-point scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree)

**Beliefs regarding armed teachers.** Table 4 presents the results of the participant's beliefs about armed teachers when asked specific questions. In regards to the question 1 (Q1), whether an armed teacher would improve overall safety, there was no significant difference between the two groups. The mean (with standard deviation in parentheses) for principals, 2.06 (0.87), was slightly lower than the mean, 2.28 (0.96), for law enforcement,  $t(34) = -0.73$ ,  $p = .47$ . Question 2 (Q2), an armed teacher would prevent a school shooting from occurring, produced similar but not exact results. The mean for principals, 1.78 (0.65), was slightly lower than the mean, 2.17 (0.92), for law enforcement,  $t(34) = -1.46$ ,  $p = .15$ . As with Q2, Q3 (an armed teacher would reduce the number of victims of a school shooting were to occur) saw no significant difference either. The mean for principals, 2.22 (1.00), was slightly lower than the mean, 2.44 (0.86), for law enforcement,  $t(34) = -0.72$ ,  $p = .48$ . The average mean for all three questions gave a relative measure of the general attitude toward armed administrators. The average mean for principals, 2.02 (0.80), was slightly lower than the mean, 2.30 (0.86), for law enforcement,  $t(34) = -1.00$ ,  $p = .32$ . The data suggests that both groups shared negative beliefs toward armed teachers.

Table 4  
*Beliefs Regarding Armed Teachers: Comparison between Principal and Law Enforcement*

Question	Principal (n=18)		Law Enforcement (n=18)		t(34)	p
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)		
Q1. An armed teacher would improve overall school safety.	2.06	(0.87)	2.28	(0.96)	-0.73	.47
Q2. An armed teacher would prevent a school shooting from occurring.	1.78	(0.65)	2.17	(0.92)	-1.46	.15
Q3. An armed teacher would reduce the number of victims if a school shooting were to occur.	2.22	(1.00)	2.44	(0.86)	-0.72	.48
Average of Three Questions Above	2.02	(0.80)	2.30	(0.86)	-1.00	.32

*Note .* Scores are on a 4-point rating scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree)

**Effect of having a full-time SRO on beliefs.** Table 5 presents the results of comparing communities that currently employ a full-time SRO and those that don't. It displays differences in beliefs related to the use SRO's. In regards to the question 1 (Q1), whether a SRO would improve overall safety, there was a significant difference between the two groups. The mean (with standard deviation in parentheses) for communities that utilized full-time SRO, 3.90 (0.30), was significantly higher than the mean, 3.33 (0.72), for communities that didn't have a full-time SRO,  $t(34) = 3.26$ ,  $p = .00$ . Question 2 (Q2), an SRO would prevent a school shooting from occurring) produced different results. The mean for, communities that utilized full-time SRO 2.86 (0.79), was not significantly different than the mean, 2.53 (0.92), for communities that didn't have a full-time SRO,  $t(34) = 1.11$ ,  $p = .28$ . As with Q1, Q3 (An SRO would reduce the number of victims of a school shooting were to occur) saw a significant difference. The mean for communities that utilized full-time SRO, 3.17 (0.56), was significantly higher than the mean, 3.07 (0.70), for communities that didn't have a full-time SRO,  $t(34) = 2.96$ ,  $p = .00$ . The average mean for all three questions gave a relative measure of the general attitude toward SROs

Table 5  
*Beliefs Regarding SRO: Comparison between Full-time SRO Community and No Full-time SRO Community*

Question	Full-time SRO (n=21) <sup>A</sup>		No Full-time SRO (n=15) <sup>B</sup>		t(34)	p
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)		
Q1. An SRO would improve overall safety within a school.	3.90	(0.30)	3.33	(0.72)	3.26	.00**
Q2. An SRO would prevent a school shooting from occurring.	2.86	(0.79)	2.53	(0.92)	1.11	.28
Q3. An SRO would reduce the number of victims if a school shooting were to occur	3.71	(0.56)	3.07	(0.70)	2.96	.00**
Average of Three Questions Above	3.49	(0.45)	2.98	(0.71)	2.48	.02*

*Note .* A n=21 (7 principal + 14 Law Enforcement), B n=15 (11 Principal + 4 Law Enforcement); The scores are on a 4-point scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Agree, 4=Strongly Agree); \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

considering whether a community had a Full-time SRO. The average mean for communities that did, 3.49 (0.45), was significantly higher than the mean, 2.98 (0.71), for communities that didn't,  $t(34) = -2.73, p = .01$ . The data suggests that principal and law enforcement officials whose communities had full-time SROs shared positive beliefs toward SROs.

**Responsibility for funding.** Table 6 presents the results contrasting beliefs by principals and LE officials concerning whose agency should fund a SRO. The both groups were given four options to choose from. There were two (11.2%) principals who felt that local law enforcement should fund a SRO where compared to zero law enforcement officials who felt the same. On the other hand, there were three (16.7%) law enforcement officials who felt the local school district should fund a SRO compared to zero principals who shared that sentiment. As far as considering a combination of both agencies funding a SRO, there were six (33.3%) principals compared to 14 (77.8) law enforcement officials who felt that way. Most principals, 10 (55.6) indicated that Federal/State legislators should provide funding compared to one (5.6%) LE officer. The data makes it clear that there was a significant difference between the two groups as far as funding was concerned. Principals favored Federal/State funding while law enforcement officials favored a combination of the two local agencies,  $\text{Chi-square}(3)=15.56, p=.002$ .

Table 6

*What Agency Should Be Responsible For Funding a SRO?: Comparison between Principal and LE*

Response Option	Principal (n=18)		Law Enforcement (n=18)	
	n	%	n	%
Local Law Enforcement	2	11.1	0	0.0
Local School District	0	0.0	3	16.7
A combination of the above agencies	6	33.3	14	77.8
Federal/State legislators	10	55.6	1	5.6

$\text{Chi-square}(3) = 15.56, p = .002$

**Best method for maintaining overall school safety.** Table 7 presents the results contrasting beliefs of principals and law enforcement officials concerning the best method for maintaining overall school safety. Both groups were given four options to choose from. There were 9 (50%) principals who felt that a SRO was the best method compared to 16 (88.9%) LE officers who felt the same.

Neither group felt that armed administrators was the best method, and only one (5.6%) principal compared to zero law enforcement officials felt that an armed teacher was the best method. The participants were also given the option to indicate other methods and eight (44%) of principals along with two (11.1%) law enforcement officials indicated alternative methods as the best for maintaining overall school safety. The data suggests there is a significant difference between the two groups in that law enforcement officials mostly felt that a SRO was the best method and that the principals were more open to other methods such as local police and other law enforcement agencies,  $\text{Chi-square}(3)=6.56, p=.038$ .

Table 7

*The Most Effective Method for Maintaining Overall School Safety: Comparison between Principal and LE*

Response Option	Principal (n=18)		Law Enforcement (n=18)	
	n	%	n	%
School resource officers (SROs)	9	50.0	16	88.9
Armed administrators	0	0.0	0	0.0
Armed teachers	1	5.6	0	0.0
Other	8*	44.4	2**	11.1

$\text{Chi-square}(3) = 6.56, p = .038$

*Note.* \*Other includes secured entrances ( video cameras); and Frequent visits from local law enforcement.

\*\*Other includes changing the internal culture of the school; and comprehensive approach SRO, student conflict resolution training and exercised plans.

**Best response to school shooting.** Table 8 presents the results contrasting beliefs by principals and law enforcement officials concerning the best response to school shootings. Both groups were given four options to choose from. There were 13 (72.2%) principals who felt that a SRO was the best response compared to 18 (100%) LE officers. It is clear, law enforcement officials feel that a SRO is by far the best option. Neither group indicated that an armed teacher or an armed administrator was the best option. In regards to other options, five (27.8%) principals provided alternatives such as local police and law enforcement. The data showed that both law enforcement unequivocally believe that a SRO is the best response to school shootings while principals are somewhat mixed, Chi-square(3)=5.81,  $p=.016$ .

Table 8

*School Resource that is the Best Response to School Shootings: Comparison between Principal and LE*

Response Option	Principal (n=18)		Law Enforcement (n=18)	
	n	%	n	%
School resource officers (SROs)	13	72.2	18	100.0
Armed administrators	0	0.0	0	0.0
Armed teachers	0	0.0	0	0.0
Other	5*	27.8	0	0.0

Chi-square(3) = 5.81,  $p = .016$

Note. \*Other includes local police; and law enforcement

**Risk related to armed administrators.** Table 9 presents the results of how both groups perceived the risk of having a school shooting in relation to having an armed administrator present on campus. Both groups were given four options to choose from. There were 5 (27.8%) principals who felt that an armed administrator would increase the risk of a school shooting compared to 6 (33%) law enforcement officials. Most principals, 10 (55.6%), and half of the LE officers, nine (50%) felt the risk would stay about the same. Both groups only had two



(11,1%) participants each that felt that the risk would decrease. There was one person from each group that didn't respond. The data showed that both groups indicated the risk would not significantly increase if an school administrator was armed, Chi-square(3) = 0.15,  $p = .981$ .

Table 9

*Risk Related to Armed Administrators: Comparison between Principal and LE*

Response Option	Principal (n=18)		Law Enforcement (n=18)	
	n	%	n	%
<i>Q. If Minnesota allowed schools to enact policies that permit armed administrators on school grounds, the risk of school shootings will:</i>				
Increase	5	27.8	6	33.3
Stay about the same	10	55.6	9	50.0
Decrease	2	11.1	2	11.1
No Response	1	5.6	1	5.6
Chi-square(3) = 0.15, $p = .981$				

**Risk related to armed teachers.** Table 10 presents the results of how both groups preserved the risk of having a school shooting in relation to having armed teachers present on campus. Both groups were given four options to choose from. There were 3 (16.7%) principals who felt that an armed teacher would increase the risk of a school shooting compared to 8 (33%) law enforcement officials. Most principals, 10 (55.6%), and just under half of the law enforcement officials, 8 (44%) felt the risk would stay about the same. Four (22.2%) principals and two (11.1%) Law enforcement officials indicated that the risk would decrease. There was one principal that didn't respond to the question. All the law enforcement officials responded to the question. The data showed that both groups indicated the risk would not significantly increase or decrease if a school teachers was armed although law enforcement officials felt stronger that the risk would slightly increase, Chi-square(3) = 3.14,  $p = .209$ .

Table 10

*Risk Related to Armed Teachers: Comparison between Principal and LE*

Response Option	<u>Principal (n=18)</u>		<u>Law Enforcement (n=18)</u>	
	n	%	n	%
<i>Q. If Minnesota allowed schools to enact policies that permit armed teachers on school grounds, the risk of school shootings will:</i>				
Increase	3	16.7	8	44.4
Stay about the same	10	55.6	8	44.4
Decrease	4	22.2	2	11.1
No Response	1	5.6	0	0.0
Chi-square(3) = 3.14, $p = .209$				

## Discussion

The risk of a school shootings will always be present. Every time a high-profile shooting takes place, the media and internet ignite in fierce debates about what can be done to prevent and respond better to such situations. The 1999 shooting at Columbine High school started the current debate and it doesn't appear that any universal solution has been found or implemented. The 2012 Newtown Elementary School massacre sent the debate into high gear. Politicians started speaking up and schools across the country started rethinking how they could avoid being at the center of the next high profile event. The use of SROs started to gain traction. Many schools hardened their building and invested in elaborate security systems. Some states even passed laws permitting school districts to allow employees to carry firearms. The present study surveyed a small sample of public school principals and law enforcement officials from Minnesota to assess the seldom studied beliefs they have concerning the use of SRO, armed administrators and armed teachers. While the sample size is very small and is not representative of the entire population, the results of this study do offer an insight to how some of the most

intimate stake-holders feel and believe. This study also adds to the ongoing effort of filling in the gaps in literature dealing with this issue.

The data suggests that both groups shared positive beliefs toward SROs. This is a good starting point because it shows there is a common belief that SROs are useful for overall school safety and at the same time helpful in preventing and dealing with school shootings. There were other areas of agreement. The data suggests that both groups shared negative beliefs toward armed administrators and armed teachers. The larger take away from this study is that both principals and law enforcement officials believe SRO's are the preferred method for maintaining school safety and are the best response in the event of a school shooting. The data suggests there is a significant difference between the two groups in that law enforcement officials mostly felt that a SRO was the best method and that the principals were more open to other methods such as local police and other law enforcement agencies.

An interesting fact is that the data suggests that principal and law enforcement officials whose communities had full-time SROs shared more positive beliefs toward SROs. There are many possibilities for this and more research should be done examining how the presence of a SRO positively effects the perception of effectiveness of one. Comparing the sample to the overall average of full-time SROs, there seems to be a higher than average presence in Minnesota schools. There were 21 (58%) with SROs and 15 (52%) without. That is higher than the national average of 38% (Reaves, 2010).

The data also makes it clear that there was a significant difference between the two groups as far as funding was concerned. Principals favored Federal/State funding while law enforcement officials favored a combination of the two local agencies. This was slightly different to the finding in the 2015 Chrursiel study. In that study, there was a divide between the

two groups. The law enforcement officials felt that the funding should be provided by the school district, while the principals felt the funding should come from the law enforcement agency (Chrursiel, et al. 2015). In this study, there was a willingness to split the costs between the two agencies. Many of the principals indicated that the state and federal government should legislate funding for SRO. More studies could be done to see how support for SROs correlates to the sources of funding.

Another insight this study proved was both groups indicated the perceived risk would not significantly increase or decrease if a school administrator was armed. The data also showed that both groups indicated the perceived risk would not significantly increase or decrease if a school teacher was armed. Law enforcement officials felt stronger that the risk would slightly increase if that were the case. As more and more states allow school staff to carry firearms on campus, data will become available to shine light on the true effects. Future studies will be able to further explore if the participant's beliefs in this study align with the realities of such practices.

## **Summary**

This study has shown that there is general support for armed SROs and that law enforcement officials and school principals hold positive beliefs about the effects of SROs on overall school safety. It also shows that there is little belief that arming administrators and teachers would be an effective step to prevent or deal with school shooting. On the contrary, this study showed that both law enforcement and principal indicate armed administrators and armed teachers may negatively contribute to school over all security with little to no benefit in the realm of preventing or dealing with school shootings. This information is crucial for guiding policy makers and crafting effective strategies to combat school shootings. It is vital that the stakeholders have their voices heard. They are the ones who deal with the consequences of such

policies, especially ones that potentially sanction the use firearms into their communities and classrooms. All the actors must believe that what they are doing is relevant and effective. If policy maker's actions don't have the endorsement of the principals and law enforcement, the policy is more likely to fail.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Summary and Conclusions**

I designed this study to better understand the perspectives of public school principals and law enforcement officials concerning the effectiveness of armed school resource officers (SROs) and armed school staff members on overall school safety and the ability to counter active shooter situations. First, I looked for existing studies exploring the issue. The only study that I found that specifically explored this issue was the South Carolina University 2015 Chrursiel study. I used this study as a template. The 2015 Chrursiel study and this study are different in more ways than just geographical locations. I decided to combine and modify the two surveys used in the Chrursiel study into one. The survey that resulted is significantly shorter and more focused on the participant's core beliefs concerning armed SROs, armed administrators, and teachers.

Second, I distributed the survey to over 1500 Minnesota public school principals and 300 law enforcement officials over a period of four weeks using email. The initial distribution was relatively small, but several participants contacted me and offered to help distribute it to a larger group through various statewide organizations. The final distribution result was as stated above. The final response was 18 from each group—a total of 36 participants in all. The group was quite small but large enough to get the data in needed for this study.

Finally, I analyzed the data. I compared the principals' and law enforcement officials' survey responses with the intent of finding both common and conflicting beliefs. The reason I did this is was simple—if we expect principals and law enforcement officials to effectively carry out public policies concerning this issue, we need give them a voice. They are on the front lines of this issue. Their perspectives are invaluable in shaping the debate and adopting effective public policies.

## **Significant Findings**

There were several findings that are worth noting. First, both principals and law enforcement officers agree that the use of SROs is the best method for overall school safety and countering school shootings. There was little support for arming school administrators and teachers from both groups. These findings were similar with the 2015 Chrursiel study (Chrursiel, et al. 2015). It is also important to note that the perspectives were similar despite geopolitical settings. Minnesota tends to be more liberal and South Carolina more conservative.

One significant difference between the results of this study and the Chursiel study was the participants' beliefs concerning who should fund a community SRO. Both principals and law enforcement officers in this study were more willing to share the costs between their two agencies. That was not the case in the Chursiel study. The indication of a willingness to share the financial burden may significantly increase the adoption and implementation of SRO programs. Not only is there support for SROs, there is a willingness to overcome one of the largest obstacles to any new program—funding.

One of the most interesting findings is the correlation between utilizing a full-time SRO and having positive beliefs about their effectiveness. Principals and law enforcement officials that had a full-time SRO seemed to like them. Those who didn't expressed less favorable beliefs toward an SRO's effectiveness. This study didn't dig into reasons why, but it begs the question--do SRO's (at a minimum) simply provide a sense of security? Communities that utilize SROs, seem to feel they are an effective tool. This single finding demands for further scrutiny. Does simply having a SRO bring a false sense of security to the community, or are they as effective as some seem to believe? There may be hidden risks with the use of SROs. Some have argued that the presence of an armed police officer sends a signal to every student that there is a need to be

surrounded by lethal force for everyday protection. The existing data around this subject seems to contradict this impression. As mentioned early on in this study, schools are some of the safest places a child can be. There are also emerging studies that suggest the presence of a SRO simply presents students with an early introduction into the legal system. Negative interactions between youth and police in high-poverty communities are proving to be a troubling phenomenon. So, if it turns out that SROs simply provide an imaginary veil of security with little actual advantage, is it worth using them despite the possible risks? This would be a great subject for further research.

### **Educational Implications**

A school shooting is a tragic event that every school principal and law enforcement official must contemplate and prepare for. Despite the low probability that it will happen at any given school, it must be anticipated. Any community that takes this threat lightly is neglectful and will face harsh consequences if a shooting does ever occur. The way we approach this issue has far-reaching consequences on defining the American public education experience.

We can mortar up every window, fence-in every campus, and install cameras in every corner. We can hire SROs, arm administrators, and arm teachers, but all these actions impact the very essence of an educational atmosphere. We don't want to turn our schools into prisons and bunkers. We want to maintain an inviting learning environment for our students. We need to find a balance between risk and reward. In an age where school and law enforcement resources are not limitless, we need to find methods that effectively combat the threat of school shootings and provide overall safety. These methods must also have the least possible negative impact on the learning environment. Most importantly, we need to listen to the people that must make these policies work. Principals and law enforcement officials need to work together to create a



culture that both provides security and foster learning. They must believe in what they are doing. They must have a voice in this debate.

In the after-math of every high-profile school shooting, the media, parents, and politicians scurry for solutions. This study attempted to explore the perspective of the key stakeholders concerning this issue. They (principals and law enforcement officials) must be involved. Their perspectives must be explored. They will determine the success of any solution. This study indicates that both principals and law enforcement officers feel that SROs provide the most effective tool combating this problem. It is not the sole solution, but it seems that it is an ideal step in the right direction. Both groups feel it is an effective tool, and they are both willing to share the financial responsibility. This study identifies a bridge between school principals and law enforcement officials—one that can be crossed with minimal resistance. The students, community, and both agencies would feel the immediate impact.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

I encourage others to keep seeking input from principals and law enforcement officials from all parts of the country. The more we know how they perceive solutions to this problem, the more effective we can be at improving school security and combating campus shootings. While this study doesn't provide all the answers, it does add to the gap in research. There are still plenty of holes to fill. Future studies could expand on not only perspectives regarding the three possible solutions outlined in this study, but others as well. This study simply showed how the participants felt and how they perceived the issue. It could be expanded to gather and mine the data to see if actual statistics back the results of this study—does the presence of a SROs increase school security and deter school shooting. Another facet that should be explored is the perspective of the teachers and possibly even the students. Both parties are considered

stakeholders in this issue as well. There is so much more we can learn about this issue. For the sake of the children, it is vital that we keep seeking information.

### **Limitations**

Unfortunately, there were limitations to this study. This study is descriptive non-experimental. The sample group was simply randomly selected and is too small to be representative of the whole Minnesota principal and law enforcement communities. Also, the response rate was very low. Out of the total 1,800 members of the targeted population, only 36 responded (2%). Even if every single member of the target population did respond, that would still only give a small window into the perspectives of law enforcement officers and principals nation-wide.

### **Summary**

I began this study because as an educator I believed it was my responsibility to do everything I can to protect the students I serve. I strongly felt that every effective tool should be available to me and all the people involved in protecting and educating our children. While I don't conclude this study with all the answers, I am left with a little more knowledge than I had when I started. There is much support for SROs in Minnesota public schools and little faith that a fire arm is an effective tool in the hands of an administrator or teacher. I will be the first to admit I do feel safer knowing there is a SRO at the school where my child attends and where my wife works. I am also conflicted. Through this research I have learned that there is strong support for SROs, yet there is little data that validates their presumed effectiveness. As of right now, they seem to be the desired tool to improve overall school safety and for dealing with school shootings. I encourage others to study just how effective SROs are and if they justify the costs and possible negative consequences. Until that is done, SROs are perceived to be most

effective tool by key stake-holders. This conclusion is invaluable to policy makers and community members state-wide. At the very least, it's a place to start an informed discussion.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### IRB Approval Letter

## 1612E02901 - PI Gauthier - IRB - Exempt Study Notification

Inbox x



irb@umn.edu

12/30/1  
6

to gauth053

TO : [hanxx093@umn.edu](mailto:hanxx093@umn.edu), [gauth053@umn.edu](mailto:gauth053@umn.edu),

The IRB: Human Subjects Committee determined that the referenced study is exempt from review under federal guidelines 45 CFR Part 46.101(b) category #2 SURVEYS/INTERVIEWS; STANDARDIZED EDUCATIONAL TESTS; OBSERVATION OF PUBLIC BEHAVIOR.

**Study Number:** 1612E02901

**Principal Investigator:** Dennis Gauthier

**Title(s):**

Perspectives of Law Enforcement and Principals about the use of SROs and armed staff for school security.

## Appendix B

### Survey Questionnaires

#### LE and Principal Perspective

Default Question Block  
Block Options

Q1

#### **Perspectives of Law Enforcement and Principals about the use of SRO s and armed staff for school security.**

You are invited to be in a research study of law enforcement and principal's perspectives about the use of armed personnel on school campuses in regards to security. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a key stakeholder in the nationwide discussion. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Dennis Gauthier, Education Department. University of Minnesota Duluth.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things: complete the following questionnaire concerning your perspectives on the use of SROs, armed administrators, and armed teachers to improve security in public schools.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is: Dennis Gauthier. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact them at UMD, 218-780-9764, gauth053@d.umn.edu. or Frank Guldbrandsen, 218-726-8172, at fguldbra@d.umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the Research



Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

By continuing this survey, **you are consenting** to participate in this research **survey**.

Page Break

Q8

Please answer the following question.

	Yes	No
1. Does your community currently employ a full-time School Resource Officer (SRO)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q7

Using a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree), please rate the extent to which you believe the statements below regarding **school resource officers (SRO)** are true.

	(1) strongly agree	(2) agree	(3) disagree	(4) strongly disagree
2. An SRO would improve overall safety within a school.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. An SRO would prevent a school shooting from occurring.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. An SRO would reduce the number of victims if a school shooting were to occur	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

Q13

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding **armed administrators**.

	(1) strongly agree	(2) agree	(3) disagree	(4) strongly disagree
5. An armed administrator would	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	(1) strongly agree	(2) agree	(3) disagree	(4) strongly disagree
improve overall school safety.				
6. An armed administrator would prevent a school shooting from occurring.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. An armed administrator would reduce the number of victims if a school shooting were to occur.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

Q12

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding **armed teachers**.

	(1) strongly agree	(2) agree	(3) disagree	(4) strongly disagree
8. An armed teacher would improve overall school safety.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. An armed teacher would prevent a school shooting from occurring.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. An armed teacher would reduce the number of victims if a school shooting were to occur.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Page Break

Q11

11. What is the most effective method for maintaining overall school safety?

- ☐ School resource officers (SROs)
- ☐ Armed administrators

- ☐ Armed teachers
- ☐ Other

Q15

12. Which of these school resources is the best response to school shootings?

- ☐ School resource officers (SROs)
- ☐ Armed administrators
- ☐ Armed teachers
- ☐ Other

Q16

13. If Minnesota allowed schools to enact policies that permit armed administrators on school grounds, the risk of school shootings will:

- ☐ Increase
- ☐ Stay about the same
- ☐ Decrease

Q17

14. If Minnesota allowed schools to enact policies that permit armed teachers on school grounds, the risk of school shootings will:

- ☐ Increase
- ☐ Stay about the same
- ☐ Decrease

Q22

15. What agency should be responsible for funding a SRO?

- ☐ Local Law Enforcement
- ☐ Local School District
- ☐ A combination of the above agencies
- ☐ Federal/State legislators

Page Break

Q18

16. What descriptions best matches your professional title?

- ☐ School Principal
- ☐ Chief of Police

- Q19

010            20            30            40            50            60

Q3

Please indicate your age.


[illegible]

Q4

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Trans-spectrum or other

Q5

- ☐ African, African American, Black
- ☐ Asian, Asian American
- ☐ Caucasian, White, Non-Hispanic
- ☐ Hispanic/Latino
- ☐ Native American/American Indian
- ☐ Multi-racial/Mixed (please specify)

-  Other (please specify)

	Import Questions From...
	Create a New Questio

## Appendix C

### Recruitment Email Letter

Hello, my name is Dennis Gauthier. I am a graduate student at the University of Minnesota Duluth. I am conducting a study to gather perspectives of law enforcement and public school principals about the use of SRO s and armed staff for school security. You were selected as a possible participant because your profession makes a key stakeholder in concerning this issue.

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things: complete the following questionnaire concerning your perspectives on the use of SROs, armed administrators, and armed teachers to improve security in public schools. The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact them at UMD, 218-780-9764, gauth053@d.umn.edu., or Insoon Han, 218-726-8682, at hanxx093@umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

The Link to the survey will be added here: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D

### Consent Form

#### *Perspectives of Law Enforcement and Principals about the use of SRO s and armed staff for school security.*

You are invited to be in a research study of law enforcement and principal's perspectives about the use of armed personnel on school campuses in regards to security. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a key stakeholder in the nationwide discussion. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study. This study is being conducted by: Dennis Gauthier, Education Department. University of Minnesota Duluth.

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things: complete the following questionnaire concerning your perspectives on the use of SROs, armed administrators, and armed teachers to improve security in public schools.

#### **Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records.

#### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

#### **Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is: Dennis Gauthier. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact them at UMD, 218-780-9764, gauth053@d.umn.edu. or Insoon Han, 218-726-8682, at hanxx093@umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), you are encouraged to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*